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SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

State pass to Interior Department National Park Service - Steve Morris

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [UNESCO](#) [YI](#)
SUBJECT: SERBIAN AMBASSADOR COURTESY CALL

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Serbia's new ambassador to UNESCO, Dr. Zorica TOMIC, paid a courtesy call on Ambassador Killion today, 8 February, at the US Mission offices. Tomic wasted no time in hitting her number one issue, World Heritage sites in Kosovo, and asked that the United States support Serbian efforts to keep UNESCO "politically neutral." End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Tomic demanded that the brackets added at the 2008 Quebec World Heritage Committee meeting around the word Serbia on the title of the Kosovo World Heritage sites be erased, calling it a "symbolic castration". She said that Serbia has the need to "preserve our roots, our heritage", and added that "for us (Serbia), Kosovo is what Jerusalem is to the Jewish people," noting that she cannot imagine it not being connected to our country.

¶3. (SBU) Ambassador Tomic said that President Tadic is working to find a "common and civilized approach" to the Kosovo problem. She added that the Serbian government is doing everything to find opportunities for dialogue, but the "so-called entity - not even a country", is making it clear that they do not want any dialogue. Tomic said that this is not good for the region. Again, she said that being a small country, the idea of "cutting out a section of Serbia is not a possibility".

¶4. (SBU) Tomic said that she will be going to Brasilia this summer for the next World Heritage meeting, and indicated that she hopes to convince the United States that it should take a "neutral position" at UNESCO regarding Kosovo.

¶5. (SBU) Ambassador Killion noted that given our bilateral relations, we can find ways to work together on other issues at UNESCO. In response, Tomic said that Serbia has proposed an education tool based on Facebook that has gotten the interest of Executive Board Chairman Mitrofanova. Mission will follow-up to learn more about this project.

¶6. (SBU) Tomic also expressed interest in improving UNESCO's efforts in girls education. She mentioned that Serbia has been working on a similar project targeting girls and women in rural areas in Serbia.

¶7. (SBU) Comment: Tomic made it clear that she will be primarily focused on one issue at UNESCO. Her priority is convincing Member States that UNESCO should do nothing to cast doubt on Serbia's claim to Kosovo. It is likely that the Serbian ambassador will have some success. We have found that Serbia enjoys some support at UNESCO. Although UNESCO's new director-general comes from Bulgaria, a country that has recognized Kosovo, we find many members of the Secretariat at lower levels remain sympathetic to Belgrade. With regard to the labeling of World Heritage sites in Kosovo, it does not help that Brazil, a state that does not recognize Kosovo, is this year's chair of the World Heritage Committee (WHC) and will preside at the WHC's annual meeting which will be held in July in

Brasilia. For a more favorable attitude, we will have to wait until 2011 when Bahrain, a recognizer of Kosovo, takes the World Heritage chair. End comment. KILLION